



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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WHO ARE DFAT STAFF?

The Department employs just over 2,000 staff, around one-quarter of whom are serving overseas. (Separately, Australia's diplomatic missions abroad employ a total of around 1,550 local staff.) The number of Australia-based staff employed by the Department has declined by 498 over the past three years, representing an 18% decrease in the number of staff in Australia and a 23% decrease in the number of staff posted overseas. The combined Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is now smaller than the former Department of Foreign Affairs prior to the amalgamation with the Department of Trade in 1987.

DFAT recruits graduates and others with potential to serve in a variety of roles. There is no discrete 'foreign service' within the Department; most staff are generalists who can be deployed overseas into what are described broadly as either foreign and trade policy-related positions or consular, financial administration and management roles. DFAT recruits strategically at the graduate entry and other levels to ensure that the Department has the right blend of skills to meet its needs in Canberra, State and Territory capitals and overseas.

People come to DFAT with a range of qualities and experiences. Around 44% of staff are female, and over 20% describe themselves as being from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. There are 25 Indigenous officers, several of whom are representing Australia overseas. Over one-fifth of staff (excluding those engaged locally overseas) maintain a high proficiency in at least one language other than English. Slightly less than half of these speak Asian, Middle Eastern or Pacific languages, though this proportion is increasing relative to those with skills in continental European languages.

Regarding formal qualifications, DFAT rarely stipulates a need for a particular degree or language specialisation. For example, the minimum requirement for graduate recruits is a three year degree in any discipline. DFAT principally looks for people with the right blend of analytical abilities, management and communication skills, and with the personal qualities to make them good team-players who can adapt to a range of different work challenges and environments.

As a measure of the diversity of DFAT's recruits, the 1999 graduate intake of 33 officers included 19 women and 14 men, within an age range 22-36. Most had degrees in law and/or economics, but several had degrees majoring in areas such as mathematics, architecture, archaeology and psychology. Nine had postgraduate qualifications and more than half hold two degrees. Languages represented in the group include Danish, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Marathi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese.

This sample is not unusual, and represents the increasing diversity of the Department's workforce - something it will continue to foster in order to respond flexibly and creatively to the challenges of the new century.

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